



Expanded scope delays I-10 plans

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Freeway planners are moving ahead to expand the bottlenecked Broadway Curve on Interstate 10, but slowly.

ADOT has long planned to double the size of the 12-lane segment of I-10 near Tempe by adding a carpool lane in each direction and building a secondary thoroughfare of eight lanes along a 14-mile stretch from Baseline Road to Interstate 17. The \$1.3 billion project was part of Proposition 400 approved in 2004.

But the start date has been pushed back from 2009 until 2011 or 2012, according to ADOT spokesman Doug Nintzel.

The reason is to expand the project's scope to handle traffic projections from rapidly booming areas of Pinal County and the City of Maricopa, southwest of Interstate 10 and Ahwatukee Foothills.

"The price tag has gone up because the stretch that we're taking a look at is much longer now," Nintzel said.

That's not a good enough reason to delay improvements that are needed now to improve pollution and traffic woes, Southeast Valley leaders say.

"I appreciate that they want to plan for the people who want to live in Maricopa and Pinal County in 2030, but they are substantially undermining the quality of life for the people who are living here in Tempe now," Tempe Mayor Hugh Hallman said.

Nearly 300,000 vehicles pass through the Broadway Curve each day, according to ADOT traffic counts. That's makes the Broadway Curve the second busiest section of the Valley freeways, behind the leg where Arizona 51, I-10 and Loop 202 meet near McDowell Road in Phoenix. About 303,000 vehicles pass through that section each day, Nintzel said.

But the load on the Broadway Curve is expected to increase to 450,000 vehicles per day or more by 2025.

Roc Arnett, East Valley Partnership president and chief executive officer, called it a "cotton pickin' mess."

"It's the second-most busy part of the freeway for heaven's sake. And accordingly it ought to be fixed," Arnett said. "But I'll be the first to admit it's not a simple fix."

The proposed Broadway Curve expansion, at 24 lanes, would work as two separate freeways, with the additional lanes running outside the current corridor and serving as a "local freeway," Nintzel said.

"The Broadway Curve is already one of the widest freeways we have, but the concept under study would create

separate outside lanes from Baseline to the I-17," Nintzel said. "It allows through traffic to travel through without a lot of weaving."

Hallman said he agrees with that idea but wants ADOT to speed up its work.

"The problem we face is that when the U.S. 60 was expanded to its widest width through Tempe, we were promised that ramps would be built and the Broadway Curve would be widened to handle more traffic," he said. "There's a huge parking lot in Tempe with NOx (nitrogen oxide car emissions) and CO₂ (carbon dioxide pollution) raining down on Tempe residents."

"And people are exiting the freeways at Rural Road and McClintock onto our arterial streets, so it's exacerbated the tie-ups and traffic on McClintock and Rural."

Hallman said he also supports completing the proposed \$1.7 billion, 22-mile South Mountain Freeway, which would complete the Loop 202 designed to ring the Valley. ADOT has envisioned the proposed freeway as a bypass to the current I-10 route, running along Pecos Road and looping west around and through the South Mountain Preserve to link to 55th Avenue.

Jim Jochim, an Ahwatukee Foothills resident opposed to the South Mountain Freeway, said he favors the Broadway Curve expansion project as a way to alleviate traffic problems and possibly eliminate the need to build the South Mountain route.

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?More concrete roads, wasting gas in heavy traffic, a thickening cloud over the valley? I'm thinking that the only solution for transportation is to increase vehicle licence fees and taxes to pay for automotive infrastructure; as in some parts of Europe and South America. Make mass transportation easy, personal vehicle transit hard and very expensive.(John1416 (John0632), February 16, 2007 07:55PM)
